

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IS
SUBJECT: DMC LEADER COMMENTS ON ELECTION AND GOVERNMENT
FORMATION

1. EMBASSY OFFICER MET MAY 25 WITH PROFESSOR AMNON RUBENSTEIN, THE FOUNDER OF SHINUI AND NUMBER TWO ON THE DMC KNESSET LIST. RUBENSTEIN EXPRESSED PESSIMISM ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE EFFORTS OF HIS PARTY TO FORM A COALITION WITH BEGIN AND DESCRIBED THE DILEMMA FACING HIS GROUP AS IT TRIES TO DECIDE ABOUT ITS FUTURE. (THIS CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE PRIOR TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT DAYAN WOULD JOIN A BEGIN GOVERNMENT AS FOREIGN MINISTER.)

2. RUBENSTEIN SAID THE PURPOSE IN FOUNDING THE SHINUI MOVEMENT, AND THEN LATER MERGING WITH THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE, WAS TO WORK TO BRING ABOUT A CHANGE IN THE ISRAELI POLITICAL SYSTEM BUT IN DOING SO TO AVOID A MOVE TO THE RIGHT. HE CHARACTERIZED THE ELECTION RESULTS AS BEING ONLY PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY TO THE DMC; IT HAD PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN BRINGING
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ABOUT A CHANGE--THE REMOVAL OF THE ALIGNMENT FROM GOVERNMENT--BUT IT HAD BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL IN AVOIDING A SHIFT BY THE ELECTORATE TO THE RIGHT--THE INCREASE IN SEATS IN THE KNESSET HELD BY THE LIKUD, NRP AND SHLOMZION. HE SAID THE DMC HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL WITH WHAT MIGHT BE CHARACTERIZED AS THE WASPS OF ISRAEL (THE ASHKENAZI JEWS) BUT "IT HAD LOST THE OTHER

ISRAEL." HE WAS PARTICULARLY DISTRESSED THAT THE DMC HAD GAINED ALMOST NO ARAB VOTES. HE ATTRIBUTED THIS FAILURE TO A LACK OF TIME AND SAID THAT IF THE ELECTION HAD BEEN HELD IN NOVEMBER, HE FELT THE DMC WOULD HAVE DONE MUCH BETTER AMONG ISRAEL'S LESS PRIVILEGED CITIZENS. (RUBENSTEIN WAS VERY DESPONDENT ABOUT THE ELECTION RESULT AND ASKED RHETORICALLY "WHAT HAVE WE DONE?")

3. RUBENSTEIN WENT ON TO DESCRIBE THE DILEMMA NOW FACING THE DMC. ON THE ONE HAND, IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT THE PARTY SHOULD BE IN A COALITION WITH BEGIN IN ORDER TO EXERT A MODERATING INFLUENCE AND TO BROADEN THE BASE OF SUCH A GOVERNMENT. HE ADDED THAT IT IS, OF COURSE, ONLY AN ASSUMPTION THAT THE DMC WOULD BE ABLE TO MODERATE THE VIEWS OF BEGIN AND HIS ASSOCIATES. ON THE OTHER HAND IT IS ARGUED THAT THE PARTY WOULD DO BETTER TO REMAIN IN THE OPPOSITION AND WORK WITH THE ALIGNMENT TO BRING DOWN THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY. IN THE DISCUSSIONS WITH BEGIN'S PEOPLE AND IN THE CONSIDERATION OF A POSSIBLE COALITION THE PARTY LEADERSHIP, PARTICULARLY THE TOP FOUR (YADIN, RUBENSTEIN, AMIT AND TAMIR), HAVE REMAINED UNIFIED; HE ADDED, "SO FAR." THE BASIC ISSUE DIVIDING THE DMC FROM THE LIKUD IS FOREIGN POLICY AND, MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE QUESTION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. MOST MEMBERS OF THE DMC WOULD BE UNABLE TO ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES WITH A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRIME MINISTER WHO PUBLICLY CALLS FOR THE RETENTION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. IN RESPONSE TO A REMARK FROM EMBOFF THAT BEGIN HAD SAID BEFORE HIS HOSPITALIZATION THAT THE MAJOR ISSUE SEPARATING THE DMC AND THE LIKUD IN THE COALITION DISCUSSIONS WAS THE ISSUE OF ELECTORAL REFORM AND EARLY ELECTIONS, RUBENSTEIN SAID THIS WAS SIMPLY A SMOKESCREEN. THE BASIC PROBLEM HE SAID WAS HOW TO REACH A COMPROMISE BETWEEN A FIRM YES AND A FIRM NO.

4. RUBENSTEIN CONFIRMED A PREDICTION WE HAD HEARD FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT THE DMC WOULD DELIBERATELY DRAW OUT THE NEGOTIATIONS UNTIL THE HISTADRUT ELECTIONS ON JUNE 21. HE ADMITTED THERE WAS A DANGER IN THIS PROCEDURE: THERE HAS BEEN NO ADVERSE OFFICIAL REACTION TO BEGIN'S ELECTION FROM THE UNITED STATES; BEGIN HAS HAD A FRIENDLY CONVERSATION WITH THE NEW AMERICAN AMBASSADOR;

THERE HAS NOT BEEN AN UNUSUALLY SHARP REACTION
TO BEGIN'S ELECTION FROM ARAB CAPITALS; AND THE
WEST BANK HAS BEEN QUIET. THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT
OF THESE FOUR FACTORS WILL LEAD PEOPLE TO A
GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF BEGIN AND TO THE BELIEF
THAT HE IS ACCEPTED, OR NOT ACTIVELY OPPOSED,
BY ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS AND OTHERS.
LEWIS

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